Neon

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25¢

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

PAUL GOODMAN

DAVID GALLER

GILBERT SORRENTINO

SAM ABRAMS

WILLIAM FLEMING

JOSE MARTINEZ

RICHARD APPLETON

JOHN HAAG

ALVA TURNER

JEANNE-RUTH HAMMEP

ROBERT STOCK

JOHN RICHARDSON

HUBERT SELBY JR.

as the sun makes it new
day by day make it new
yet again make it new

AN EDITORIAL

Because of questions and complaints arising from the fact that I did not state clearly an editorial position in NEON #1, I find it necessary to state my position now.

If a little magazine is to be worthy even of the paper it is printed on, it must at least have a policy of publishing that which is new; to get that which is new is, of course, something out of the hands of the editor. All he can do is sit and wait and hope that the material will come in. Coupled with this difficulty is the other difficulty, the one of being confronted with manuscripts which are not new in the true sense, manuscripts containing work which is not moving toward a new conception of literature by virtues of changes in techniques of narration, metric, plot (or nonplot) line. To reject the last type of manuscript would be to have no magazine--or perhaps to have a magazine containing the work of one or two writers. Certainly (at least to me) dumping a magazine because all the material to be published is not new is stupid. All we have is the little magazine--and among these, perhaps half "officially" dedicated to seeking out the new. Of this latter class we need every one we can get--and more.

Assuming that NEON did not come out because of a lack of new material; and assuming that next month or next year in perhaps East Bohunk, Idaho, a manuscript was completed of the quality and vigor and momentousness of Joyce's Ulysses--a work which only the then defunct NEON would have published--what then?

The point of course, being that with magazines like NEON the new can be published. Without magazines like NEON, the difficulty remains: no outlet for the avant-garde writer.

The little magazine has fostered modern literature since before the First World War. It has been its strength and support and oftentimes its only outlet. While the little magazine exists, exists still with the purpose of publishing the new, the different, the radical, literature will exist come war or peace or assembly-line education.

For this reason NEON is published; for this reason NEON will continue to be published as long as the material received has a shred of promise and/or originality. When material like this stops, NEON will stop.

---Gilbert Sorrentino

JOSE MARTINEZ / THE VILLISTA

"We had been fighting now for three days," the old man says, "and Villa had told us we would take the town in one. They had driven us into the hills and the men were disgusted. They thought Villa had lied to us, that he was using us as bait to draw attention away from himself. Some had deserted but most of them were fanatic enough to stay. I was wounded in the knee the third day. Here, look at it. The scar is still there after almost forty years." He rolled up his pants leg and showed us the scar, a brown mottled pucker near the kneecap. "When we knew we had to retreat all the way, I told them to leave me behind. We had no horses and I could not walk. But Fidencio Flores, who had been with me for three years, said no, if I was staying, he would stay with me. I pleaded with him to go. For two hours I begged him but he would not go. The rest of the men were already gone. Go, I told him. Leave me. No, he said. I will stay. So he stayed with me until that night. We were the only two left. The others, the ones who had also been badly wounded, all six of them died that afternoon. Then that night, Fidencio put me on his back and walked twelve kilometers to a farm where they hid us for three weeks until I was well enough to travel..."

He had been talking now for almost an hour. We were the only people in the place--the four of us GI's and the old man. While he was talking I was watching John's face. At first he took it all right, but then he started getting mad. I could tell. When John gets mad you can tell it. He was in the infantry for almost two years in Korea and in that time he picked up a bronze star and a purple heart and he doesn't like to talk about the Army or wars or anything like that. So when somebody else talks about things like that, John just gets up and leaves. But this time we were sitting there killing time waiting for our dates to get off from work. Me and John, that is, because the other two guys, Al and Louie, they never go out much with girls. Anyway, John probably figured the old man would get tired of talking pretty soon and go away. But he never did. He kept talking about his days with Pancho Villa and how easy we had it in the U.S. Army, not rough like in the Mexican Army in the old days, and about how those guys were soldiers, not pansies like us.

Nobody had asked him to join us, but anyway, here he was talking our arm off. We were all pretty tired of listening to him. Especially John.

He stood up, and I thought he was going to the can. But all of a sudden, he leans across the table and hits the old man in the face--klunk!--and a couple of us grabbed him and pushed him back in his chair and held him there.

The old man got up, tears rolling down his brown cheeks.

"All I was trying to do was to be friends," he said. "Why do you hit me?"

John is a very excitable guy. He weighs almost two hundred and when he hit the old man I thought the old man wasn't going to get up. But he did. And when he got up, he was sobbing.

The bartender, Tacho, is a good friend of ours and he pretended to be looking somewhere else.

"You have no respect," the old man said. "All of you, you have no respect."

"Get--him--out--of--here," John said, very slow, trying to get up. "I'm tired of his goddamn crap. If you like it in Mexico so much, why in hell don't you go back and join their goddamn Army?"

"You have no respect for your elders," the old man said. "You should learn to respect."

Then he turned around and walked out of the place.

"These goddamn old-country bastards give me a pain in the ass," John said. "Get us some more beer, will you, Tacho?"

None of us said anything for a while after that. We were ashamed and kept looking away from each other. Everybody except John. He kept talking and laughing as though nothing had happened. The rest of us, all three, just sat there and drank the beer and listened to him.

We didn't much feel like drinking, and when I said maybe we should go out and drive around town, everybody was for it except John. We were sitting there, trying

to talk him into going with us, when he looked behind us and said, real low, "Je-sus Ka-rist."

I turned around and saw the old man looking at John, pointing a twenty-two at him. We all got up and moved away from the table and John sat there and looked at the old man with the gun.

"I will teach you a little respect," the old man said. "For your elders."

I thought, Oh, damn, not here, not now.

"Mister Garcia," the bartender said. "Mister Garcia."

"A little respect," the old man repeated.

The bartender stayed where he was behind the bar. "Mister Garcia, please." The old man did not hear him.

"All you young ones, you think you know everything. You have no respect."

The screen door opened behind the old man and a guy about to come in saw him pointing the gun at John and stopped, his mouth open, and went back out. We watched the door as it slammed shut. I looked at John and then back at the old man.

"Mister Garcia," the bartender said again. "Give me the gun."

Then John whispered, "Shoot, old man, come on, shoot."

The old man raised the gun to his shoulder. John got up and came around the table and took a couple of steps, slow, toward the old man. "Shoot, old man," he said again.

"Do not approach me," the old man said.

"Come on, shoot," John said.

"I am telling you, do not approach me."

John was now standing about six inches in front

of the gun. I started thinking about the crack of the twenty-two and what kind of a hole it would make in John's khaki shirt. I wondered if the bullet would hit one of the buttons.

"Mister Garcia," the bartender said from behind the bar.

John raised his hand very slowly. Very deliberately, he reached up, while we held our breath, and took the barrel of the gun, and the old man let go, trembling. John took the twenty-two and put it on the table while everybody, including the old man, watched. Then he turned to the old man and said, "You old sonofabitch," and hit him--klunk!--knocking him down.

The door opened and a dark good-looking girl rushed in, followed by the guy who had come in a couple of minutes before and gone back out again.

"Papa!" she said, seeing him on the floor. She knelt by him, and he looked up at her and smiled, tears rolling down his cheeks. She looked up at John, who was the one standing closer to the old man. John bent over and helped her pick up the old man.

"He fainted," John said, to nobody. I wanted to laugh.

"Come home," said the girl. "Ernesto," she said to the guy who had come in with her, "help me, please?"

They went out the door, the three of them in a bunch.

"Give us another round of beer, will you, Tacho?" John said. Nobody said anything for a minute. Then John said, "Goddamn, these old-country bastards can take it, huh?"

SAM ABRAMS / TWO POEMS

APRIL 16 - FROM HIGH

Green a thread between grey trees:
The moon turns over the lake,
Its shadow resting near two terns.

Greening a subtle thread
some precocious trees and the red
haze of the Japan cherries.

The bird's lake is the eye
towards which green tends,
while the red smokes to the sky.

SO SO CONNED

Up and down Pharisees, their minds old states,
To find in all this garden "no
Conception of Freedom"
Not the forsythia so sprayed, most fierce, wild
of green,
Nor the wisteria flow down the weathered wall,
Nor all the fall and rush of lilac in their scent.
Hyacinthos wailing in a hundred vases.
And you,
You tell me the republic will not fail.

ALVA N. TURNER / MY VISITOR

You came to see me this afternoon.
You went to school to me when you were five years old.
You had an old School register in your hands;
For your father had been one of my school directors.
You wanted to know if I had ever seen you before.
"Not that I know of," I replied.
You see, that was fifty-three years ago.
Then you told me that you were Willie West,
The youngest of three sons of Jonathan West
Who was one of my three school directors
Of the first school I ever taught.
This was close to Bluford, Illinois.
This town has a townhouse now.
All the fellows that used to be there
Are dead.
And many of my pupils are dead too.

I boarded with Enoch Green,
One of my three school directors.
His oldest girl, who married the man who was courting,
Went out at the back door
One night to reach the front door.
She had on my overcoat and hat,
Although it was not cold weather yet.
But, of course, I seized her.
Then began a laughing scuffle
That the visitors and brother and two sisters
Might hear.
But the scuffle continued
Until I had kissed her

She is dead now, but I remember
That moonlight kiss she gave me
As if it were yesterday.

JOHN R HAAG / POEM

Spring hit at us hard this spring
come as it was in the seeming
midst of things expecting something
of us we got by being busy as we were
with this and that somehow hard
to remember what but
anyway the birds came
churching back and we slept sundays
after hard soft after winter
blooming nights of love
for someone, every spring has memories
or absences some lapses in the scheme
of things that let us by and
strike us later why we didn't notice
what was coming attractions coming
all too soon and natural
repulsion and the spring is come
and gone hard and no
one is around to tell us
where we'll never know.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS / TO MY FRIEND EZRA POUND

or he were a Jew or a
Welchman
I hope they do give you the Nobel Prize
it would serve you right
        - in perpetuity
with such a name

If I were a dog
I'd sit down on a cold pavement
in the rain
if it so pleased me
to wait for a friend (and so would you)
even if it were January or Jukofsky

Your English
is not specific enough
As a writer of poems
you show yourself to be inept not to say
usurious

WILLIAM FLEMING / MOTO PERPETUO: AN ALBA

Winter
(and HE in the whiting dawn):
Splintered
the rain, but the snow
So
frailly was falling 's 'twere on water;
Slight! - 'n as on water? Oh no! - on snow!
Whiteness on the whiteness drawn.
God! ah God, the white dawn!

As, on
an earlier day, through Fall's
Haze on
the gardens, uprist
Wisps
drifted from out a mow'r - diffused with
Difficulty, in the stilly mist....

- Till was
then SPLENDOUR! when, horizont
Spilt was
the sun! and its rays
Blazed
flaming upon the second-storey
Opposite windows, grazed the lawns' glaze,
(God! ah God, the white dawn!)

Discovering the least eminences;
Or they touch the spume only of the shadowed seas....

Spectra,
in late December, re-
fract from
my jew'ls, on the mat,
That,
superimposing COLOUR thereon,
Point up how dingey and dry's this flat.

Down oh! The sun's warm.
God! ah God, the white dawn!

DAVID GALLER / TWO POEMS

THOMAS

Few voices are fit bearers of a miracle.
(Two days under that gaping sky,
lost in the love of Him who died---
the withered root, where I flung my wrist,
was a manacle;
each dove, each lizard, was a lie.)

Their fervor with the facts was a black disguise.
(Each righteous rook expected me to doubt
He had risen. Hard eyes under cowls
bespoke it: they thought I had fled Golgotha,
gotten me wine,
a wench and a hillock, forgetting my vows.)

Cold, tired, I ran my nail on the Wounds;
fidgeted the Palms in black company---
leper to their eyes. With the flail of pity
He consoled me: "Yes, Thomas, but I live;
some love I found
in jabbering wind, on the idiot-tree."

ODYSSEUS TELLS THE QUEEN OF HIS LOVE FOR NAUSICAA

I plead I needed real clothing,
even as kings wear kingship in their eye,
swine in sties sport mud...

Call me, Arete, if you wish,
the ape of my own confession,
the bitter ghost in a woman's ear, her anguish,
say I crawl toward Ithaca to strike.

But tell her
our goddess of wisdom
        who dreams a mind can solve a conscience
made me handsome:
tell her no man
        can strut from a bush forever
naked,
with a gleam.

GILBERT SORRENTINO / TWO VIGNETTES: HOLIDAYS

NOEL NOEL NOEL

Cold. Damn cold it was that night. We sat in the room and she looked at the frost on the windows. She said that it was a real Christmas Eve and not at all like the warm ones we seemed to be having lately. Then all of a sudden she starts to cry and says your grandfather was with us last Christmas Eve -- and now he's gone. I'm sitting there looking at the hotel lamps and the hotel bedspreads and the hotel furniture and especially I'm looking at the goddamn cardboard wastepaper basket with a ship on it. A big clippership, all sails on. The whiskey I had in the afternoon is still in me -- I've got just the edge of being high left -- so there we sit and all of a sudden I figure that maybe we ought to get something to drink and I say Mom, how about something for Christmas? Some wine maybe? Good sherry? because she always liked sherry. She says OK. So I put on my coat and go down in the elevator and talk a little with the elevator operator -- a pretty friendly guy. Then I go past all the old ladies sitting in the lobby, Mr. White at his post staring out the big windows at the building across the street. Then I go out to the street and go down to the liquor store and buy some real fine sherry -- Duff Gordon -- and come back. The operator says a little Christmas joy hah? I say yeah. Some Christmas cheer. Then I'm in the room again and we open the sherry and I pour two good shots into water glasses and we drink. I can hear some goddam Salvation Army band singing Christmas carols. My mother says listen -- isn't that beautiful? I say yeah. It's beautiful. She says maybe you'll go to mass tomorrow? With me? Maybe at least you'll go <u>there</u> with me? I say maybe low and then say it <u>is</u> nice singing. Whaddaya think of the sherry? Good, hah? She says yes, it's very good sherry, her eyes looking across the room.

SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT -- ?

We're standing on the corner in front of Yoeckel's and it's New Year's Eve and Joe has his hands in his pockets stamping up and down like me to keep warm. Absolutely no money. Joe says this stinks and I say it's really a bitch. He says you think we should go up and see if Keller's home? Maybe we can scrounge a few bucks and buy some beer -- or some wine anyway. I say <u>Keelers's?</u> He says yeah. So he's a nut. So

what? Better than freezing our asses on this corner. Maybe he went out to a party I say. Keeler? A party? You must be the nut. Come on. What the hell why not? I figure and say OK and we take off.

He was in allright. When we rang the bell he comes to the top of the stairs and yells down for us to come up. Not even looking to see who we are. What did he give a goddam anyway? We go in the house and the phonograph's blasting away, a big stack of records on the floor just waiting and Keeler's drunk. Come on in gentlemen. I want you to meet my cousin Homer -- so in we go to Keeler's bedroom and there's Homer on the floor. Some guy who looks like Dr. Cyclops with these goddam glasses yay thick on him and he's drinking whiskey out of a thick coffee cup -- like the kind you get in a cafeteria. Keeler says this is my cousin Homer and sticks his finger up his goddam nose and pulls out this snot and slaps it on the wall along with the rest of the dried collection. Joe says how about a drink Harry? and Keeler goes into the kitchen and brings back two bottles of Kinsey -- bar quarts -- both unopened. The other open one's on the floor he says. I'll get some glasses. He goes out again and comes back with a coupla jelly jars and we all sit down. Homer says I didn't expect company Harry. Neither did I Keeler says but they're old pals -- then his big green teeth hang out of his mouth and he laughs his goofy laugh.

The Prez is blowing a chorus with the whole band behind him and Keeler's got it so loud you can't hear him and then he starts to shout and I still can't hear him so I bend close and I hear -- post office like the morgue? I smile and shake my head and he yells they send all the dead letters there and starts to laugh like a maniac and I smile and make believe I'm laughing and look at Joe who's getting blind drinking out of the bottle. What the hell. He might as well have some kicks. I get up and walk out to see where Keeler is and he's sitting at the kitchen table crying and looking out the window at the bar across the street. What's the matter? I yell. She didn't have to typewrite the letter he yells and turns around. The whore bitch typewrited the fuckin letter and I don't know what the hell he's talking about and all of a sudden I remember that some bitch who must have once kissed the poor bastard dumped him -- this was three, four years ago -- and she typed the Dear John letter out to him. He could never get over that. Take it easy Harry I yell. He

just looks out the window again and drains his whiskey and keeps crying so I go back in the bedroom and sit down on the floor and try to get drunk but I know that if I do It'll just be a lousy one -- dead. Cousin Homer's picking the dried snots off the wall with his fingernail and I look at Joey again. He's in a daze his eyes like two marbles. Hey Joey! I shout. Joey! He turns and looks at me and says fuck you only I could just see his lips move. Well he's alive I figure and I start to pour whiskey again and all of a sudden I hear a noise in the other room and I walk in and Keeler's pounding on the wall with both his fists and he turns then and shouts GET OUT! YOU AND JOEY! GET OUT! You rotten cheap BASTARDS! Drinking my goddam whiskey! That's all you give a goddam about! I yell over hold it Harry! What the hell's the matter? And he starts to came at me and trips on the phonograph wire and yanks it out and all of a sudden it's quiet and he stands there crying like a baby and I can hear horns and pots and pans and far away bells coming through the window soft like.

NOR HEED MY CRAFT OR ART

To watch that. Crisping and crumbling inward, greening from the bluing churned beyond; he did. Sight reached and encompassed (at once), stabbed and enfolded. Head he turned.

A beautiful thing. Christ.

To smash, flying to waterfeathers, spumes of crash rainbowing, rainbows spuming, smash, so that the stabbing and enfolding become shift (from right to left, oblique, vertical, parallel).

He activating it in part, it he; reciprocating motioning and movement--stabbing again as crisping smoothed toward churning blued beyond.

Toward, away, over and over.

(All the while his hand sought, found, held; occasionally squeezed: her hand.)

Beautiful. Yes.

Words (sounds) flying out, up; reaching the churning blued beyond--though no longer (paragraphs 1 & 3) as IN those designated paragraphs. Time marches (I can get rid of "on").

Nor did he (stabbing, squeezing, hearing) think of: noun (dead man); verb (the uncontrolled horse) then; the magic of art. YOU name it--thing can become (beslum, bedumb) anything you wish.

Moons of green cheese.

Worlds which never were (so what?).

Man eats steak (shit, woman)--three WHOLE (pardon the word) novels.

And so are you.

Lips found; lips forward; lips pushing; lips pushing; lips (s) pushed.

Kissing a reciprocative churning (though not blued).

Redded? Why not? They kissed, churning redded not beyond; redding churned here. As of course, beyond--cf. paragraphs 1 & 3 and repeat till the end of time (if God so desires).

That's your story.

JEANNE-RUTH HAMMER / TWO POEMS

sun up sun down

blue fish run in my stream
bite at the skimming flies
and a yellow sun's blase'
     while the birds sing merrily

simply simply sings my tune
of gay ribbons I lent to you
so many my yesterdays
     you never you never gave back to me

even the fish you stole
you never gave back

ROULETTE

Toss a coin
life in vain
recoding weary worlds
at war with apple-blossom trees

winter rain
turns sleetward
autumn wine
refills the pain
sun-pinched in desolation

round spot
in the centre
my eyes follow at every stance I take
the round spot
turning red to black
fading back to red and quite singular
in my vantage point of perception
as X is where my body lies
and blinds my eyes

RICHARD APPLETON / AT THIS TIME

"Yet tell this to the Possum,
A bang, Not a Whimper,
With a Bang, not with a Whimper,
  To build the city of Dioce
      Whose terraces are the colour of stars."
                                (Pisan Cantos)

I

Sun-disc paling,
Salt crust on rock-slime,
Sea-scowl electric,
And a brown foam
   Lapping the flustra:

Softly,
From birth-puckered crying,
Slowly
The clear music blurring,
Revolt and the Ego subdued,
To grey (with whimpers) dying;
Or the bomb blast
On the clear night
And the fragments flying.

(the sea-snail shrinks
from the dark-cut shadow,
our minds, our essence,
might so flinch tomorrow)

Choice of Nirvana, Dioce,
Or a neither, new, but Striving,
Dioce, or Nirvana,
Or a slow or blasted dying.
(this planet's latest move is
                ....cooling)

A cold shore,
A tidal wave looming,
This is the winter-greyed edge
    Of the interim season.

PAUL GOODMAN / HANDBALL PLAYERS

The Americans and the Porto Ricans
can't play, they pound the wall,
some o' the Jews some o' the Irish
and sometimes an Italian play;

We have a game and some of us
play handball, some just slam away,
but there isn't a cock of any race
that I don't lust to suck it off

to take in my fear comfort
from the loyalty of pleasure
and nourish me from their
inexhaustible excitement.

The sun is white, leaping my shadow
is darkly blotted and erased,
slap o' the ball shuffling feet
a ringing cry in the air

a shout that pauses in still air --
so I have visited for thirty years
courts of New York and Chicago
loitering and listening:

"Because we play these funeral games
in memory of musicians dead
of which the horror and sick grief
remain although we jump for joy."

I am compelled, compelled
to a repeating folly.
If I do not do this
what else shall I do?

My angle-shots are sharp again
They bound away, the ball is bright
and like Jupiter portentous
or Saturn in the summer night

the sacrifice we offer here
is looming in the zodiac
and on the white-hot court we are
Chico, Gussy, Paul, and Jack.

ROBERT STOCK / TWO POEMS

COMMENTARY ON ROBINSON CRUSOE

Poor Crusoe . . Accounted wretch . .
poet of ledgers . .
mandrapore open bay palm bole
wash away in Europe's tide . . .

(The dream then
:marine lappings pretended overhead:
that dream
-- locked endomorphic crystals --
recessed within a dream: of one emerging,
anonymous, delivered of the sea
that binds in septic darkness,
immense, self-beholding by such bright braille
groped by ten sticks shipwreckt near coral,
and then --- false dawn,
rising among goats and strident flamingos,
unable, now, to compose
where it was commanded: Control!
Next, the master crystal, turned in the hand
and twisted in the eye: of tempests bred
in a sulky fit of damp sun;
a hardening
torment of green and bronze
flies in whose buzz the sleeper
flutters his eyes, sits outright
where haze thickens along Thames' side)
polity of waters deepening on his head).

So all the island complications
converge silently
with spoked mastery
to the island centre

diverge

as though a
stone, stone
were thrown into the scarlet thicket
of a company of feeding flamingos.

So, Crusoe, that footstep in the sand,
was it your own step?
deed-done purposely forgotten
and interlegended with a past?
VESTIGIUM UMBRA NON FACIT

stock /

Prerogatives could forfeit you your soul.
From Pernambuco you carried away /
that preposterous carnivora the Curupira
(malignant little anthropomorphism
with feet irrationally back-end-to).
Zig, zoom as you will, you're bound
to fetch up rattling in his hackly arms.

For Friday is simply another day,
expedient for penny-reckoning, tedium
before your weekly impotent's bath.

Again you swim -- as always as
you never fail to do --
naked out to the breaking ship
and fill your pockets
with hard substantial biscuits.

ALBA

Moon
nacre of Endymion
look! why comes it so soon
the dawn?

Waxen wench
O you who in the surf of our attractions
are a pearl awash,
avert, preclude the dawn.

What if the dream's malingering cobweb
did fail to catch you full?
You'll never again have such a bribe
of darkness as this one
through which tonight you fall.

JOHN RICHARDSON / TWO POEMS

A CAT?

I was a cat once, I told a friend --
I remember a dark city, alleyways
in which I prowled, ever mindful of the danger.
My head was strong, my eyes of yellow flame,
in my unending hunger I was strong,
my coming and going quiet as unknown winds.
My friends were alleycats --
lean hungry quickeyed suspicious alleycats
who when they saw me bared stone fangs
and threatened me with claws
until they saw my naked yellow eyes
and knew I was a brother.

I wanted nothing, I was self-contained,
my world a narrow alleyway, stale beer
and garbage drifting down the thin brick gutters;
fighting and copulating in the night shadows
until men came, and because we had no god
razed our world and
killed and mutilated me.

"And what are you going to do," my friend asked,
"now that the cat is dead?" "I don't know,"
I replied, folding my hands stealthily,
concealing the stone claws growing there;
"I don't know," I repeated slowly, closing my eyes
subtly, hiding the yellow flames, "Perhaps,"
I said, stifling a feline yawn, "The cat's not really dead."

john richardson /

ADOLESCENCE

The night we fished the moon's corpse from the river
Sluicing mists and waters as we drain our thoughts
And scorning formaldehyde
Bury them --
So blind was our expectation
Curving parabolically toward morning
That the electric succubi, softly
Rubbing the thirteenth rib of our puberty
Filled their laughing mouths full of our breathing,
Strangled our bastard dreams without our seeing,
And carried away all meaning of tomorrow
Without one superstition on our part:

I loved you then, dark girl, your lips
Brushing mine, stopping not to lick
Your body, swelling universe, in my arms.
We deceived the god himself --
Before, that is
the motor mechanism stripped a gear
And strained credulity
Straining now not to mock
The semen-flood that we had made a promise
Become at last a quart of motoroil
Joining the putrescent abortions in Irkalla.

He had been in the sanitorium 2 years and wrote to his wife every night. When the doctors told him that they and the consulting specialist thought it necessary that he undergo the operations he almost wept because of his fear of pain. They tried to explain the necessity of the operations being performed as soon as possible before the disease spread to the other lung. He tried not be believe it. Why can/t you cure it without a ribjob? Why do you have to cut so many out? I/ll be no good after. How do I know I wont die? I don/t feel strong enough to take it. Why can/t you...

They explained it again, more slowly: We can/t do it any other way. You have been in the hospital for almost a year now on complete bed rest--yes sir. I/ve stayed in bed all the time. I/ve obeyed all the rules. I want to get better. I want to go home to my wife--Yes, we understand, and we want you to go home; well. But there is no other way. We have tried bedrest and streptomycin. And, although you have made some improvement, you are still a long way from being cured. You still have a considerable amount of disease in the upper portion of your right lung. Your left lung is sound and we want it to stay that way. That is why we advise you to have the operations now, before it has a chance to spread. Now, we have discussed your case thoroughly and we are sure that surgery will clear that up.

But so many ribs? Can/t you do it no other way? No, we can/t. Even if you were willing to spend the next 10 years in the hospital; and I/m sure you do not want that. And we are not going to remove more than 6 ribs. Perhaps only 5. Most of your disease is up high--up here in this area--so we may only have to remove 5.

--Look, we understand how you must feel, but this is the only way. And get the idea out of your head that you will be no good. Certainly you will have to take care of yourself, but with surgery you will be able to go home in a years time and if everything goes as it should, (and we are certain that it will) you should be able to go back to your old job shortly after.

Well... I guess you/re right... I don/t kn-- Of course we are. Now, we can schedule you for the first operation Monday; alright? Yes sir... I guess so. I/d sure like to get home to see my wife... Any chance of getting a pass before the operation? I/m afraid not. But don/t worry, it wont be long...

The letters were longer the next few days. He spent the entire night writing; the bed table pulled up under his arms, chewing the end of his pencils, looking up from his letter every few minutes, resting his head on his hand, then putting his hand over the part written and continuing the letter.

He cried when he awoke from the operation. He fell back to sleep after getting a hypo, awakening hours later and crying again: I/m dying... Oh God help me, God help me--Try and lie still Mr Hewis, I/ll get you something to ease the pain. Another hypo and back to sleep for a shorter period. All through the night he moaned and wept. Oh my God, please help me... Moma, MOMA! Help me... I hurt, I hurt so terrible... Please somebody help me... Somebody...

As the days passed the hypos became weaker and weaker. He begged for more but eventually they were, of necessity, stopped. The other men in the recovery room, all undergoing the same operations, lost sympathy and patience. They yelled at him to shut up. You aint the only one in here... For christ/s sake keep quiet... Everytime I almost get to sleep you start screaming like a baby--I hurt, I HURT!--SO DO WE GODDAMN IT!

Three weeks after the first operation he had the second and three weeks after that the third. The pain increased with each operation. After the third and final operation he was put in a private room and a nurse was in attendance 24 hours a day. His fear seemed to carry with him even after being anesthetized. He fought on the operating table so strongly that he was bruised by the heavy staying straps. He wrote few letters until almost 3 months after the last operation.

At first his recovery was dubious. Afraid of the pain he just lay in bed refusing to move or eat. As the pained lessened, and upon the insistence of the doctors, he increased his activity until he was eating as he should and the doctors told him that if he continued following the prescribed therapy he would be able to go home in 9 months or maybe sooner.

He was taken out of the private room and put back in his former bed in the ward and he slowly started smiling, talking, and writing.

One day he received a letter from his father and he asked the doctor for a 3 day pass. I have to go home. It/s important. I/m sorry, but we couldn/t possibly let you go home now. But I have

to. We know you must be anxious, but it is impossible. Look, you have been doing very well since the operations and I see no reason why you should not be able to go home for Christmas; so just sit tight. It/s only a few months away. You wouldn/t want to jepardize everything now, just as you are on your way to beating this thing, would you? Think it over; you/ll see I/m right.

He stayed. He didn/t smile or talk anymore; he just stayed in bed and listened to his radio all day and wrote all night. A few days before Christmas the doctor told him he could go home for the holidays. But be careful. Take a nap every afternoon and get plenty of sleep at night. This is the first time you will be out of the hospital in a long time--Yes sir, almost 2 years--yes, so take it easy. How will you be traveling? Train. How long does it take? About 5 hours I think. Well be sure to rest as soon as you get home. A train ride that long can be tiring, so take it easy. Yes sir, I will. Well, here is your pass. Enjoy yourself--and Merry Christmas/

He toyed with his father/s letter on the train. He ran his fingers along the edge of the envelope over and over and over. she/s just lonely i was away a long time i don/t care what happened that/s the only reason it/ll be different when i get home i/ll get some candy some chocolate creams she always liked them it can/t be people get lonely is all it/s a long time o god not while i was being cutup i still hurt not then in my own house living there i understand things like that happen it/ll be alright it has to be i did it for her she knows how i love her what would i do without her she can/t it/s not my fault i got sick what could i do i never stopped her having a good time she must think i don/t understand when i tell her i forgive her i don/t hold no grudge it/ll be different then i told her that i guess she was ashamed to write things/ll be different honest they will o god make them different...

He walked up the walk to the house, a gift wrapped box of chocolates under his arm; stared at the christmas wreath on the door and rang the bell...

What are you doing here? I got a pass for the holidays. I bought you a box of chocolates, I--I don/t want you or your candy. I never did. Now go on and get out of here. You don/t un--Look, I don/t want you, don/t you understand. I got a real man now. Go home to your snooping mother and old man. That/s where you belong anyway. You always

were a moma/s boy. That/s all you were ever good for. You couldn/t be a man if you lived to a hundred. Honey, I don/t care what happened, I j-- Honey, Honey, HONEY! Beat it! Do you hear? GET OUT OF HERE!!!

She slammed the door--the Christmas wreath falling at his feet. From the neighboring homes came the sound of carols and in the windows Christmas lights were burning. The box of chocolates slipped from his hand as he stared at the door.

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The cover for the second issue of NEON was designed by INEZ TAYLOR.

Manuscripts accepted with the usual stamped, self-addressed envelope. Sorry, no payment available at the present time. All inquiries and mss. should be addressed to: Gilbert Sorrentino/ 4812 FOSTER AVE. BROOKLYN, N.Y.

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NOTE: The first issue of NEON is still available.